

“SLIP ON RESEARCHS OF THE TONGUE” IN TURKISH

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Slips of the tongue have been a topic of interest for many years, especially for researchers who are trying to figure out how language production mechanisms work. In 1895, Merginer & Mayer attempted to account for language production with the help of speech errors, more specifically slips of the tongues. Years after Merginer & Mayer, Fromkin started to collect slip of the tongue data in attempt to explain why these errors surfaced in speech (Fromkin, 1973). Through a systematic analysis of her data, Fromkin confirmed the presence of linguistic structures such as phonemes, segments, and features. These analyses successfully identified patterns within slip of the tongue errors, leading to the proposal of a five-stage production system which only focused on production, leaving out the concept of speech monitoring. Her analyses also revealed the nature of complex consonant and vowels, affricates and diphthongs, along with other phonetic phenomena (Fromkin, 1973).

Aside from paving the way for language production theories and revealing the nature of linguistic elements like phonemes and syllables, slip of the tongue errors can help us analyze and (to some extent) understand the nature and production process of specific languages, as well as how that language’s native speakers’ brain work while producing the language. As of today, there are not much research done on slip of the tongue errors in Turkish and existing ones lack analyses about language production process in Turkish or what can the data tell us about linguistic nature of Turkish and its speakers. One of the most exhaustive studies on Turkish slips¹ is a corpus study by Erişen (2010). However, this study only makes a typological comparison between Turkish, English, French and German corpora. The first stage of our research² aimed to start these discussions about slips in Turkish and made use of newly obtained slip data from native Turkish speakers over the course of 1 year, by the author. The next and ongoing stage of the research³ involves creating a larger dataset⁴, a more in-depth analysis of the final dataset, and creating a corpus.

To collect the initial data, I used Fromkin (1973)’s method where she recorded every slip she heard being produced, or was reported to her by her colleagues, or was self-reported by the people who produced slips.⁵ After the initial data collection stage, I organized the tokens according to the language they have been produced in and the type of the slip. Types of slips I used while categorizing are in line with categorization of Fromkin (1973) and are obtained from Fromkin (1973) and Mustofo&Akhmad (2018) with some adjustments to better suit our purposes.

- **Shift:** When one speech segment whether lexical, morphological, or phonological disappear from the location it should appear, and appear somewhere else in the utterance. Example: production of “girmesin demiştir” instead of “girmesinler demiştir” is a morphological shift. The plural morpheme -lar appears in a position it should not.
- **Exchange:** When two speech segments appear in each other’s position in the utterance. They can be considered as double shifts. Example: “farik” instead of “fakir”. This is a phonological exchange where the phonemes r and k appear in each other’s position.

¹ From now on, “slips” can be used instead of “slip of the tongue errors” in this paper just for efficiency.

² By Author 1

³ By Authors 1 & 2

⁴ With the help of over 100 participants self-reporting in a WhatsApp group

⁵ Occasional questionnaires and a WhatsApp group was used for ease of reporting for the first stage of this research)

- **Anticipation:** When a later segment in the utterance takes the place of an earlier one or appears earlier in the utterance. Example: “I would like **you** to take **you** out on a date.” instead of “I would like to take you out on a date.” This is a lexical anticipation where the lexeme you appeared earlier in the utterance.
- **Perseveration:** When an earlier segment in the utterance takes the place of a later one or appears later in the utterance. Example: “nefeskefen” instead of “nefeskesen”. This is a phonological perseveration where the phoneme f takes the place of a later phoneme.
- **Addition:** When a segment which originally has no place in the utterance is produced in the utterance. Example: “ünlüydür” instead of “ünlüdür” the phoneme y is added to the utterance.
- **Deletion:** When a segment is left out in the utterance. Example: “simility” instead of “similarity” where the segment -ar is deleted.
- **Substitution:** When a segment is replaced by another segment which originally has no place in the utterance. Example: “**Cuma** Sokak” instead of “**Camii** Sokak” this is a lexical substitution where the lexeme Camii is replaced by the lexeme Cuma.
- **Blend:** When the speaker considers more than one word, and the words blend. Example: “çabak” when “çorba” and “tabak” were tried to be produced at the same time.

Initially, 148 tokens were collected. 116 of them were in Turkish and 32 in English. Of these 148 tokens, lexical substitution had the widest distribution with a number of 48 tokens. Of 116 tokens in Turkish, 37 of them were lexical substitutions. This distribution shows us that Turkish follows the universal tendency of languages to produce lexical slips by substitution. The reason behind this is probably that during the speech production process (mentioned more in-depth in the main text) some of the lexemes that are coded under the same conceptual category in the lexical network have a higher activation level which can result in the wrong item being selected and tagged and the wrong selection of a higher item is easier than that of a lower item. The important point here is that there is a categorical constraint on the wrongly selected item. The item should belong to the same syntactic category as the intended item, as they are going to occupy the same slot in the utterance.⁶ This constraint applies to morphemes and phonemes as well, with the difference of different categories for each one, instead of syntactic categories. An affix can be replaced with an affix, a stem can replace stems and so on (Dell, 1986). I can hypothesize further for lexical substitutions that there should be a semantic relationship between the replacing item and the replaced item. Moving forward with this hypothesis, looking at lexical substitutions in Turkish can reveal which lexemes are stored under the same category or have strong relations with each other in the brain of a native Turkish speaker. One last important detail to point out about lexical substitution slips in Turkish is that on the lower-level selections, the correct morpheme is always selected and tagged.

In the current stage of our research, we have 4240 tokens (and counting!), and the categorization and analysis of these tokens are still ongoing. We can report that there are new categories of slips to be identified as well, one being “written slips” where speakers⁷ write a word in their L1 with the orthography of their L2 or vice versa i.e. “adır” instead of “other”, or write what they think instead of what they intend to. Another such category is “read slips” where speakers read a written word or a phrase in a different way, possibly caused by priming effects i.e reading “daydreaming” as “daydrinking”. We think that there is a lot more to unpack and our end goal is to create the largest corpus of Turkish slips and Turkish L1-English L2 bilingual slips so that researchers from many disciplines whether it be Linguistics, Psychology, Cognitive Sciences, or more can use it for their own research.

Keywords: language slips; psycholinguistics; language production; corpus

References:

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⁶ This constraint is not specific to substitution and can be observed in other strategies like shift and exchange.

⁷ Mostly bilinguals

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